

Guardians of Tradition

*American Schoolbooks
of the Nineteenth Century*

RUTH MILLER ELSON

There is probably no better place than a schoolroom to judge of the character of a people, or to find an explanation of their national peculiarities. Whatever faults or weaknesses may be entailed upon them, will show themselves there without the hypocrisy of advanced age, and whatever virtue they may possess is reflected without admixture of vice and corruption. In so humble a place as a schoolroom may be read the commentaries on the past, and the history of the future development of a nation.

Francis J. Grund, 1837

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To Robert and Elizabeth

Manufactured in the United States of America

and urban, agrarian values which had been a natural growth in earlier America became articles of fervent faith in American nationalism. The American character had been formed in virtue because it developed in a rural environment, and it must remain the same despite vast environmental change. The existence of a bounteous and fruitful frontier in America, with its promise not only of future prosperity but of continued virtue, offers proof that God has singled out the United States above other nations for His fostering care. The superiority of nature to man-made things confers superiority on the American over older civilizations. That Uncle Sam will sooner or later have to become a city dweller is not envisaged by these schoolbook writers, although their almost fanatical advocacy of rural values would seem to suggest an unconscious fear that this might be so. In an even more striking anachronism than in late nineteenth-century schoolbooks, the association of the distinctively "American" with a life close to the American soil still seems to be operative in present-day popular thought. James Fenimore Cooper and Robert Frost are often believed to represent "The Real America" more than F. Scott Fitzgerald or Henry James. Perhaps the idea of living close to nature is a fundamental human aspiration.

Chapter 3

GOD AND MAN

Just as God appears to be the final cause in nature, so He is also the final cause in human history. The last sentence in a History published just after the Civil War expresses the universal sentiment: "We cannot but feel that God has worked in a mysterious way to bring good out of evil. It was He, and not man, who saw and directed the end from the beginning."¹ Although religious emphases change during the century, none of these books is secular; a sense of God permeates all books as surely as a sense of nationalism. All of the early Readers and Spellers devote the greater part of their space to the subject of God's relationship to the universe, to man, and to the child himself.² Gradually more secular interests are asserted, but a religious tone is evident throughout the century. In the early period most Spellers use the Bible for basic reading material, and several recommend the New Testament as a Reader.³ By the 1830's nonbiblical stories begin to outnumber those from the Bible, although many Readers and Spellers maintain passages from the Bible throughout the century.⁴ As late as 1880 the extraordinarily popular Webster Speller includes at least one sentence on religion in every group of practice sentences: "The Holy Bible is the Book of God," "God created heaven and earth in six days," "We go to church on the first day of the week." "The devil is the great adversary of man."⁵ Emphasis on the Christian story appears extensively

¹ H 1867 Willson, p. 434.

² For a discussion of the relationship between religion and child psychology up to 1835 see Monica Kiefer, *American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), pp. 28-68.

³ S 1814 Pike, p. viii; S 1821 Hull, pref.

⁴ For examples: R 1866 Sargent-3, pp. 132-133; R 1867 Edwards-5, pp. 133-136; R 1866 McGuffey-4, pp. 216, 223; S 1874 Worcester, pp. 178-179; R 1897 Baldwin-5, pp. 45-47.

⁵ S 1880 Webster, pp. 26, 29, 30, 34, 52, etc.

even in arithmetic problems: "How many days is it since the birth of Our Savior?"⁶ Most Spellers, whether or not they devote themselves primarily to scriptural lessons, prepare the child to read Scripture by giving a list of individuals mentioned in the New Testament to be memorized by the student.

It was evident in the previous chapter that God is the creator and ruler of the world. His benevolence in this role may not always be immediately obvious, but the child is assured that His love and mercy are present in the very structure of the world. As the benevolent ruler of human history He is also the supreme judge of human actions. If in this role His benevolence is not always patent, belief in His absolute justice, rendered in love and mercy, nevertheless is enjoined on the child. Although God is omnipotent and omniscient, and one must obey His laws as revealed in Scripture, He is a benevolent despot. The Calvinist Jehovah is often present in the earlier books, but as the century goes on He is increasingly a deity who tempers His justice with loving kindness. By the second half of the century, although the child is told now and then to fear God,⁷ it is more often love that is demanded of the reader.

Throughout the century values and actions approved by the textbook writers are assumed to be blessed by God; conversely, disapproved values and actions are cursed by God. Unethical behavior is not only socially undesirable but sinful. God is a firm and inexorable judge who not only metes out punishment after death, but who gives earthly rewards and earthly punishments for men's actions on earth. Thus a small boy in one story leaves his companions for fear "that some of them would drop down dead" as punishment for their constant swearing.⁸ Death, ever present in these books, is a punishment to the guilty but a release to the innocent. To the twentieth-century reader such constant concern with death may seem morbid, but the nineteenth-century child witnessed death more frequently than does his twentieth-century American counterpart. Although the descriptions are sentimental, they realistically reflect high rates of

⁶ A 1808 Thompson, p. 43; see also A 1795 Root, p. 45; A 1809 Grouet, p. 15; A 1810 Hendrick, p. 70; A 1863 Lander-P (Confederate), pp. 32, 38, 49, 52, 115.
⁷ R 1866 McGuffey-4, p. 81.

⁸ R 1830 Putnam-I, pp. 46-47. For an extended discussion of this see pp. 252 ff, below.

child mortality. The death of the innocent appears in countless tear-evoking scenes: "Mother, how still the baby lies!"; "There's but one pair of stockings to mend tonight." "Put away the little playthings that the darling used to wear."⁹ Deathbed scenes written by Charles Dickens are most popular; Little Nell or Paul Dombey expire in almost every Reader from the late 1860's on. The death of the innocent is their gate to everlasting life, and contemplation of such transmigration a spur to good behavior on earth. The viewer should not mourn, but should use the occasion to ponder the weakness of man in the eyes of God as well as his own transgressions. Often such lessons to the living become painfully vivid; the small reader is warned that a few days before, the dying child was as well as the reader is at this moment.¹⁰ Whether by earthly or heavenly rewards, God is the sole support of the ethical system; moral behavior is necessary because God demands it. As systematized theology, religion almost disappears from the later books, but it always maintains a prominent place with regard to man's moral behavior. It has become a religion of ethics rather than one of theology.

Usually it is assumed that everyone performs Christian rites and duties naturally and unself-consciously. But in three popular books in the second half of the century an extract from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes indicates that in some circumstances the performance of religious rites may lead to social embarrassment. A new boy at Rugby is ridiculed when he gets on his knees to pray. He persists and Tom Brown supports him; finally, it becomes the thing for all boys to pray on their knees. "Manly piety" has triumphed.¹¹ This is the only explicit recognition that the devout Christian is surrounded by an increasingly secular civilization.

Like the later books, those in the beginning of the century are concerned with God as the creator of nature and moral law, but they also evidence a much greater interest in theology than do the later schoolbooks. Probably as a reaction to the deism, agnos-

⁹ The preceding three quotations are from the following in that order: R 1866 McGuffey-4, pp. 109-110; R 1869 Wilson, pp. 21-23; R 1867 Edwards-4, 244-245.

¹⁰ R 1864 Moore (Confederate), pp. 38-39.

¹¹ R 1874 Hillard, pp. 141-146; R 1879 McGuffey, pp. 183-189; R 1896 Holmes and Hill, pp. 185-189.

ticism and atheism of the Enlightenment, they frequently offer proofs of the existence of God. One author warns of too great an interest in philosophy. Those who have pushed farthest in that study, the Greeks, Hindoos, and Romans, "have departed most from the pure faith and worship of the one true God."¹² Atheists, deists, and free-thinkers, who hardly ever appear in the later books except in connection with the French Revolution, are lumped together and, although vaguely defined, vociferously denounced. Webster in 1836 identifies the latter two in his definition: "Infidel, Deist—one who disbelieves revelation, or the divine origin of the Christian religion."¹³ Such a relatively clear definition occurs in only two other instances.¹⁴ Although all denounce such groups, schoolbooks at the beginning of the nineteenth century do so in greater detail, offering intellectual arguments to prove the existence of God in opposition to the arguments of the atheist. As the nineteenth century advanced, deism retreated before the religious revivals in all sects. By the mid-nineteenth century the child is prepared to thank God for His goodness and to follow the morals of Christianity, but not to refute the apparently moribund issues of deism and atheism.

The arguments against deism appear mainly in the form of arguments against Thomas Paine and Voltaire. The assumption throughout the books is that both men denied the existence of God. Two books quote part of the speech of Thomas Erskine at the trial of the publisher of *The Age of Reason* to the effect that the whole of government and society rests on the Bible; therefore, any denial of revelation is shocking and subversive of the social order.¹⁵ The structure of the globe and the beauties of nature "convict the infidel of his errors, and the visionary philosopher of his folly in attempting to account for creation without the mighty hand of a Deity."¹⁶ Deism and atheism are assumed to be illogical as well as sinful. They are also believed to be a fertile source of immorality and depravity.¹⁷

¹² R 1813 Richardson, p. 100. ¹³ S 1836 Webster, p. 25.

¹⁴ S 1815 Pickett, p. 218; G 1818 Morse, p. 4.

¹⁵ R 1811 I. Cooke, p. 253; R 1826 American-S, pp. 160–162; see also R 1814 Alden, pp. 53, 84–85, 93–96; R 1823 Richardson, p. 179.

¹⁶ G 1806 Webster, p. 294.

¹⁷ R 1801 Heaton-P, p. 64; R 1811 Lyman, pp. 176–184; R 1819 Strong, p. 69.

But the major point made against the deist is his denial of personal immortality. By this the individual loses hope and cannot be cheerful.¹⁸ The argument against the denial of revelation is enforced by fear. Many scenes are set at the bedside of the dying infidel whose sufferings are horrible to contemplate as he realizes his foolhardiness too late for redemption.¹⁹ One author asks rhetorically what good will fame do for the historian Gibbon when he faces his Maker: "I would not, for the richest mitre in the kingdom, be a Gibbon in my latest moments."²⁰ To prove that science and religion cannot be antithetical, Newton, Boyle, and Locke are used as examples of scientists and philosophers who were also Christians. One author asks if the reader considers himself more intelligent than Newton, Locke, Milton, and George Washington, who were all sound Christians.²¹ The hallowed name of Washington is often evoked on this subject; one of the major characteristics assigned to Washington is that he was and always felt himself to be guided by God. Several Spellers at the time of the Civil War suggest discrimination against atheists in job opportunities: "If there is a vacancy, though the atheist is capable, do not give him the agency."²²

Most of the Geographies introduce the subject of religion by dividing the religions of the world into two basic categories—true and false. True religion consists in "worshipping God, according to His revealed will."²³ That there can be only one true belief is assumed: "Every belief cannot be equally true."²⁴ And true religion is limited only to Christianity: "*It is found in its truth and purity* only where it is derived from divine revelation. This was given to our first parents, and again to Noah. . . . It was renewed in the Mosaic or Jewish religion, and was developed in its perfect form in the Christian religion."²⁵ Some Geographies,

¹⁸ R 1803 Murray-S, p. 53; R 1802 Alden, p. 56; S 1802 Snowden, pp. 128–130; R 1839 S. Goodrich, pp. 283–284; R 1840 Snow, pp. 181–182.

¹⁹ R 1811 I. Cooke, p. 180; R 1811 Lyman, p. 202; R 1823 Morrill, p. 220; R 1823 Richardson, p. 179; R 1848 Tower, pp. 96–99.

²⁰ R 1797 Alexander, p. 110.

²¹ R 1803 D. Adams, pp. 131–132.

²² S 1857 Parker and Watson, p. 87; S 1866 Watson, p. 86.

²³ G 1843 Mitchell, p. 49.

²⁴ S 1843 Fowle, p. 29; see also S 1819 Pike, p. 154.

²⁵ G 1866 Woodbridge, p. 312.

especially in the 1830's, would specifically limit true religion to the Protestants, who "take the Bible only for their guide in religious matters," whereas the Catholics are guided also by the pope.²⁶ In all books published between 1776 and the Civil War, even when such flat statements as the above do not appear, anti-Catholic feeling is strong and universal, as will be seen below.

All the books identify virtue only with Christianity: "There never was any system besides that of Christianity, which could effectively produce in the mind of man, the virtues I have hitherto been speaking of." Religion is "the only basis of society."²⁷ Furthermore, Christianity is necessary for civic progress: "Wherever the Gospel has been received, there civilization, industry, morality, knowledge and happiness have prevailed."²⁸ Proof is offered by the observation that "Christianity is the prevailing religion of the leading nations of the world."²⁹ Their power has spread their virtues to the rest of the world in a process confidently expected to continue well into the future: "Christian nations are more powerful, and much more advanced in knowledge than any others. Their power is continually increasing. They have colonies in many Pagan countries. . . . They establish schools and other useful institutions: and there is no doubt that in the course of a few generations the Christian religions will be spread over the greater part of the earth."³⁰ Humanitarianism is also associated with Christianity: "*Those nations are most distinguished for justice and kindness in which the Bible is best known, and Christianity most pure.*"³¹ In the Geographies Christianity is, indeed, one of the criteria used to evaluate the degree of civilization attained in each country. All address their readers as Christians and assume the virtuous to be Christian. This produces a problem in dealing with the heroes of classical Greece and Rome,

²⁶ G 1830 Smiley, pp. 29-30; see also G 1827 C. Goodrich, pp. 19-20; G 1833 Clute, p. 308; G 1839 J. Worcester, p. 7.

²⁷ First quotation is from R 180? Murray, p. 67; second is from R 1866 McGuffey-5, p. 306.

²⁸ G 1807 Parish, p. 119; see also G 1793 Workman, p. 57; G 1820 Darby, p. 135; G 1824 Woodbridge and Willard, p. 211; R 1827 Pierpont, p. 186; G 1828 J. Worcester, p. 143; G 1830 Bazeley, p. 174; G 1848 Mitchell, p. 162; G 1843 Mitchell, p. 50; G 1878 Swinton, p. 20.

²⁹ G 1809 Tarbell, p. 19; see also G 1869 Warren-C, p. 15.

³⁰ G 1887 Warren, p. 16. ³¹ G 1866 Woodbridge, p. 326.

who often appear as illustrations of such particular virtues as patriotism. These books abound, for example, in descriptions of the death of Socrates, illustrating the nobility imparted to the soul by belief in its own immortality; here Socrates is actually used as an argument for Christianity. But such illustrations nevertheless contradict the general tone of the books, which finds virtue only in conjunction with Christianity. Some authors apologize for the use of such examples: "The time, however, is coming when profane poetry will give place to the songs and devotions of the blest—when our earthly Parnassus will bow in submission to Mount Zion above."³²

In this period true religion is patently limited to Protestantism. Catholicism is depicted not only as a false religion, but as a positive danger to the state; it subverts good government, sound morals, and education. Condemnation is usually vociferous when dealing directly with the Roman Catholic religion, and in the treatment of Catholic countries as well. From the 1870's to the end of the century such harsh condemnation is softened, but it is continuously violent up to that time, heightened a bit, perhaps, during the period of Nativism.

Several authors specifically blame the Roman Catholic Church for the decline of the Roman Empire: "The Roman Catholic religion completed their degeneracy and ruin."³³ Most of the textbooks hold the church accountable for the superstition they find rampant in the Middle Ages. Church doctrine itself became mere superstition: "And the Christian world was distinguished by little more than *name* from pagans and idolaters."³⁴ Several make this a charge against the church in all ages by stating: "They worship before images."³⁵ One suggests that the conversion of the idolatrous natives of Paraguay by the Jesuits was "an

³² R 1825 A. Cook, p. 168; see also R 1804 Peirce, p. 21; R 1811 Hubbard, p. 45; R 1831 Harrod, p. 62.

³³ G 1817 Cummings, p. 168; see also G 1818 Mann, p. 340; G 1825 Butler, p. 251.

³⁴ R 1845 D. Adams, p. 146; see also R 1803 Murray-S, p. 113; R 1811 Lyman, p. 255; R 1826 Greenwood and Emerson, p. 385; R 1828 Robbins-P, pp. 190-191; G 1837 Book of Commerce, p. 154; G 1853 S. Goodrich, p. 183; S 1862 Watson, p. 86; G 1866 Woodbridge, p. 314.

³⁵ G 1828 Smiley, p. 29; see also G 1807 Parish, p. 154; G 1824 Woodbridge and Willard, p. 174; G 1833 Clute, p. 251; G 1866 Woodbridge, p. 314.

exchange not much for the better.”³⁶ Thus missionary activity, highly praised in Protestantism, is often disapproved in Roman Catholicism.

The power of the papacy is the most severe point of attack in portraying the Reformation and the organization of the Catholic Church. The institution of the papacy is regarded as a gigantic hoax and conspiracy. One Speller sees fit to ask the question, “Is papacy at variance with paganism?”³⁷ And in the context of these books one would expect a negative answer. A typical treatment is the following: “For many ages the Popes not only pretended to be infallible, but exalted themselves above all the kings of the earth, to the very throne of CHRIST; assuming the right of pardoning sin, and of giving or rather selling the liberty of indulging in every species of wickedness and corruption.”³⁸ The papacy is generally referred to as a “usurpation,”³⁹ and it is always described as a form of tyranny. In one case it is compared to the tyranny of the British before the American Revolution: “He [Samuel Adams] would have suffered excommunication rather than have bowed to papal infallibility, or paid the tribute to St. Peter.”⁴⁰ The indulgence is described as an invention by the pope, who “very wickedly pretends to pardon for money people who have sinned, and tells them that God will not punish them.”⁴¹ Here the abuse of the doctrine is described as the doctrine itself. All descriptions of Catholic doctrine are most unfavorable.

The Roman Catholic Church and its clergy are pictured as greedy for money. The Readers and Spellers contain many pictures of clergymen begging for money but refusing to use it for charitable purposes.⁴² The wealth of the church is the subject of frequent comment. One Geography analyzes the cost of

³⁶ G 1784 Morse, p. 134; see also G 1824 Woodbridge and Willard, p. 183; G 1826 Blake, p. 156.

³⁷ S 1866 Watson, p. 86.

³⁸ R 1823 Blake, p. 131; see also R 1789 Webster, p. 167; R 1794 Burgh, pp. 88–91; S 1824 Guy, p. 25; G 1825 Butler, p. 216; R 1826 Greenwood and Emerson, pp. 81–83; R 1832 Edwards, p. 215; G 1853 S. Goodrich, p. 185.

⁴⁰ R 1826 Frost, p. 73.

⁴¹ G 1837 Village, p. 81; see also R 1823 Blake, pp. 128–129; R 1828 Robbins-P, p. 200; R 1828 S. Willard-G, p. 94; R 1834 S. Willard-P, p. 64.

building St. Peter’s: “It would take a person from the age of twenty-one to the age of seventy years, to count over this enormous sum, provided he counted three thousand dollars an hour, and was employed twelve hours in the day for the whole time.”⁴³ The surveys of Roman Catholic countries in the Geographies always present great contrasts between the poverty of the people and the vast wealth of the clergy.

Religious persecution is the favorite theme. Anglican persecution of the Pilgrims is assumed to be the reason for their migration to America. But they were not forced out of England: they came of their own free will, to establish the principle of religious freedom in America. The only persecutions that are fully described are Catholic persecutions of Protestants. These appear in abundant detail from the picture in the *New England Primer* of the burning of John Rogers by Queen Mary of England, to Samuel Goodrich’s description of the St. Bartholomew massacre, which the pope “deemed . . . glorious events.”⁴⁴ The Inquisition is mentioned in many Readers and in all of the Geographies until near the end of the century. The following is a typical description: “The unhappy victims were either strangled, or committed to the flames, or loaded with chains, and shut up in dungeons during life, their effects confiscated and their families stigmatized with infamy. . . . Nothing ever displayed so fully to the eyes of mankind the spirit and temper of the papal religion.”⁴⁵ The Spanish Inquisition with its more effective means and methods is always identified with the Inquisition of the central church. Because the texts depend heavily on English literature, they have a convenient villain for Catholic persecution of Protestants—Mary Tudor of England. In most of the Readers she appears in the act of creating Protestant martyrs. A softening of hostility toward Catholics in the later part of the century is suggested by a lessening of attention on Mary; in one view of her, in 1866, she is still quite as cruel as heretofore, but the author goes on to say that there are

⁴² R 1792 Dana, pp. 153–156; S 1809 Perry, p. 117; S 1857 Parker and Watson, p. 78; see also G 1837 Book of Commerce, p. 166.

⁴³ G 1831 Blake, p. 60; see also R 1797 Alexander, pp. 187–188; G 1837 Village, p. 81.

⁴⁴ R 1785 New England Primer, p. 13; G 1853 S. Goodrich, p. 202.

⁴⁵ R 1825 Blake, pp. 228–230.

good and bad Catholics as there are good and bad Protestants, "but Mary was a bad one."⁴⁶

The character and learning of the Catholic clergy are severely criticized throughout. In 1784 Morse says of the German clergy: "The Protestant clergy are learned and exemplary in their deportment, the popish ignorant and libertine"; and of the Polish: "The popish clergy are said to be in general, illiterate bigots; and the monks the most profligate of mankind."⁴⁷ The regular clergy are most violently and consistently attacked, mainly on the grounds of hypocrisy, personal immorality, and greed. These charges appear in such forms as the following: "The monks and ecclesiastics themselves, who today will pardon your sins for a groat, tonight will become defiled with your bosom-companion in her marriage-bed. And the daughter on whom you dote, while saying her mass, will become debauched by a pretending saint!"⁴⁸ Such criticisms of the morals of the clergy occur even in the practice sentences on the Spellers: "The controversy at the monastery with regard to the profligacy of the clergy encouraged proselytism."⁴⁹ At best the regular clergy are portrayed as slothful parasites living on the hard labor of the poor. The fruits of the labor of the Italian peasant enter either the coffers of a rich landlord "or the overflowing treasury of some church or convent—the abodes of sloth and vacuity."⁵⁰ One of the most popular single selections on this subject disclosed the judgment of a magic philosopher's scale which weighs true worth: the heart of the English philanthropist Howard far outweighs a socially useless "monk, with austerities bleeding and rare."⁵¹ In several cases the Catholic clergy is depicted as using the most dastardly means to acquire possession of the souls and bodies of those of another religion.⁵² The Jesuit order is the embodiment

⁴⁶ H 1866 Lossing, pp. 41–42.

⁴⁷ G 1784 Morse, pp. 166, 172.
⁴⁸ G 1818 Mann, p. 293; see also R 1828 Robbins-P, p. 192; R 1828 Willard-G, p. 182; R 1831 Cheever, pp. 430–434.

⁴⁹ S 1857 Parker and Watson, p. 145; see also S 1824 Guy, p. 14.

⁵⁰ R 1826 Frost, p. 196; see also R 1827 Pierpont, p. 175; R 1828 Willard-G, pp. 181–183; R 1831 Smiley, p. 108; G 1835 Huntington, p. 138; R 1853 Mandeville, pp. 19–20.

⁵¹ R 1828 Putnam-A, pp. 46–51; R 1843 Olney, p. 206; R 1841 Merriam, p. 213; R 1844 Smith, p. 164; R 1851 ASDUK, p. 117; R 1851 Tower, p. 140.

⁵² R 1796 Bingham, p. 184; R 1830 Hughes, pp. 15–17.

of such unscrupulousness; their behavior in such circumstances is anti-Christian. One selection in several Readers personifies a family Bible and describes its adventures: "[I] had some hopes that I might have been able to infuse a spark of Christian charity into the Jesuit's heart," but these hopes are quite in vain.⁵³

Catholicism is believed to have deleterious effects other than impoverishment on the general population. By a curious juxtaposition of clauses used to describe the people of Catholic countries, the reader is left with the impression that the Roman Catholic religion induces both ignorance and indolence. It is said of the French in Canada: "Perhaps nothing tends more to brutish ignorance and depravity of manners, than a religion so much made up of mere external ceremonies"; of the Irish: "The greater proportion of the inhabitants are Papists, and many of them live in the most abject poverty and ignorance"; or of Europe in general: "In the Protestant countries, and in those favored with a mild and liberal form of government, the mass of the people are more enlightened and better informed, than in those where the Roman Catholic is the prevailing religion"; of Ecuador: "The Roman Catholic religion prevails, and ignorance and indolence pervade the great mass of the people."⁵⁴ Even when no specific charge is made that Catholicism produces an ignorant population, the implication is clear. A few authors make unqualified statements that the Catholic Church has deliberately attempted to maintain ignorance: "The perusal of the *Scriptures* is also forbidden to the people in most Catholic countries; and in this way one of the most important sources of knowledge and one of the strongest motives to its acquisition is taken away."⁵⁵ One of these authors puts great emphasis on the lack of scientific and educational advance in Catholic countries, and blames it specifically on the church; later—and, one suspects, inadvertently—he notes the eminence of the French in scientific

⁵³ R 1801 Heaton-P, p. 63; see also G 1784 Morse, p. 106; R 1823 Blake, pp. 138–147; S 1863 W. Adams, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Of the French in Canada, G 1818 Mann, p. 168; of the Irish, G 1833 Clute, p. 239; of Europe in general, G 1835 Huntington, p. 146; of Ecuador, G 1853 S. Goodrich, p. 165; and see section on Southern Europe in this study.

⁵⁵ G 1824 Woodbridge and Willard, p. 188; see also G 1818 Smith, p. 79; G 1866 Woodbridge, p. 314.

discoveries.⁵⁶ One book mentions that the Catholic Church provided the only facilities for education in the Middle Ages, but this is described as a conspiracy to keep knowledge from the people in order to keep power for the church: "They added their own cunning devices, further to render obscure their own teaching. The more mystery they could weave into every science, and, the more perplexing the labyrinth into which they could lead their pupils, the better it suited their purpose."⁵⁷

Only books designed for use in Catholic parochial schools deal favorably with the Catholic religion and Catholics. In the others, stories of individual Catholics in a favorable context do occur, but they are rare, and they are lost in the vehemence and reiteration of condemnations that are stated and implied in the rest of the same schoolbook. The humanitarianism of the Bernardine monks is an oft-told tale in the Readers. It would seem hard to dissociate their work from the Catholic Church, but this is achieved in several cases: in five instances before 1865, they are identified as Catholic monks; in three other instances, all after 1850, they are individual humanitarians with no visible relationship to the Catholic Church.⁵⁸ In all the Readers and Spellers before the end of the Civil War there are only eleven other instances where individual Catholic benevolence is mentioned; all occur before 1840. It seems safe to conclude that echoes of the Nativist movement at this time created a heightened awareness and fear of Catholicism and forced the rejection of any stories that treated identifiable Catholics sympathetically. One author seems to illustrate such a change: in 1839 S. Goodrich offers a pleasant picture of life in a convent, and a story of a monk heroically offering his own great artistic talent to God. In 1853 the same author presents a violently biased picture of the Catholic Church in which he accuses it of approaching idolatry.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ G 1824 Woodbridge and Willard, compare 188 with 190.

⁵⁷ A 1846 Mix, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁸ In the following they are identified as Roman Catholics: R 1832 Progressive, pp. 99-100; R 1834 S. Worcester, pp. 179-181; R 1838 Blake, pp. 93-94; R 1840 Angell-3, pp. 114-115; R 1850 Swan, pp. 58-61. In the following they are not identified as Roman Catholics: R 1850 Webb, pp. 58-60; R 1851 Swan-P, pp. 56-59; R 1853 McGuffey E-1, pp. 52-55.

⁵⁹ R 1839 S. Goodrich, pp. 201-203, 41-44 compared with G 1853 S. Goodrich, p. 183.

It is clear, however, that although some of the stories depicting Catholics favorably are deleted in the Nativist period, this indicates no dramatic change in bias. In the earlier period just as in the later, and coexistent in the same books with the favorable stories, the Catholic Church is heartily condemned. No theme in these schoolbooks before 1870 is more universal than anti-Catholicism. To come across a description of an earthquake by an observer named Father Kircher, obviously a Catholic but one who is treated noncommittally, is not only startling;⁶⁰ it is also unique. With these few exceptions, Catholics, clergy and laymen, appear in an unfortunate light. Throughout the period the Spellers offer in the lists of words to be memorized many terms referring to Catholicism, such as "nunnery, abbot, monastick, papist, papal." Such words need not suggest condemnation of the religion they represent but in the context of the textbooks it becomes clear that they are needed only to understand the literature of anti-Catholicism. The texts themselves certainly offer no other use.

It is evident, then, that schoolbooks in use in the United States from 1776 through the Civil War provided fertile soil for the anti-Catholic agitators of the Nativist period.⁶¹ It is also clear that the many Catholic immigrants arriving in America in this period would face strong hostility for their religion as well as for their foreign birth. The school child in this period would associate Catholicism only with unpleasant behavior and subversive beliefs. He would imbibe not only the idea that its theology is false, but that it is inimical to industry, prosperity, knowledge, and freedom—concepts considered basic to all civilization. According to those schoolbooks published before 1870, Catholicism has no place in the American past or future, nor in the economic and political climate of the United States.

In books published after 1870 anti-Catholicism is muted. Here, with few exceptions, the courage and self-sacrifice of the French Catholic missionaries is admired. The monks of St. Bernard are described in many Readers and praised for their

⁶⁰ R 1803 Murray, pp. 123-126.

⁶¹ For extensive treatment of this movement see Ray Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Sister M. L. Fell, *Foundations of Nativism in America* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1941).

work. One exception is an 1896 McGuffey Reader, where they are referred to only as "the good men," with no suggestion of their connection to the Catholic Church.⁶² On the whole, the ameliorated attitude in the second part of the century is more negative than positive: the United States remains a Protestant nation founded on Puritan principles, but the stream of anti-Catholic invective present from 1776 through the Civil War disappears, probably underground. The child would still know of Protestant rather than Catholic contributions to American culture, but at least he was not being taught about positive dangers in the Catholic religion. The decline of Catholic countries is still remarked, but it is attributed to degeneration rather than to superstitious religious institutions. Several elements in late nineteenth-century American culture probably contributed to this mitigation of anti-Catholic sentiment. Religion in the schoolbooks lost its earlier doctrinal content in the second part of the century. Man and his civilization are just as dependent on God as they were in the earlier books, but God is now shown to be the creator of the world and the founder and executor of the ethical system on which our civilization rests—although religion is still basic to life, religious institutions are much less prominent. Whose interpretation of Scripture as authoritative becomes less important. Probably interest in the developments and problems of this world—the Civil War and its aftermath, industrialization, and the movement west—absorbed energies that had once centered on sectarian controversy. America was more self-confident and more secular. Furthermore, probably some of the earlier Catholic immigrants had now a respectable middle-class position in their communities, and they carried enough political power to influence textbook content directly or indirectly. By the end of the century, for whatever reasons, questions of race and nationality occupy the schoolbooks more than does that of religion. The stratification of men by religious sect is largely superseded by national or racial classification. Certainly the later schoolbooks use the categories of race and nationality as the most prominent way of making significant statements about men. This change is visible in the treatment of the Jews as well as the population of Catholic countries.

⁶² R 1896 McGuffey-2, pp. 109–112.

It should be unnecessary to add that texts used in Catholic parochial schools are an exception to all of the foregoing. Throughout the century these books maintain their sectarian point of view: "There can be but one true religion," whose benign influence is the basis of civilization.⁶³ They show Catholicism as the foundation of national independence: "Scotland retained its faith and its independence until the Protestant Reformation. It then lost the faith of St. Columba and soon afterwards its national independence."⁶⁴ In a piece from Chateaubriand the teachings of Jesus are asserted to be the basis of patriotism: "In Him the love of country may find a model."⁶⁵ Denial of the pope led to the destruction of Napoleon, and in a larger sense the Protestant Reformation threatened European society with anarchy and despotism.⁶⁶ What was to Protestant books the Dark Ages, in which monks kept knowledge from the people, becomes in these books the age of Charlemagne and St. Louis, wherein science and learning were preserved by the clergy. The discovery of America is the direct result of the Catholic piety of Columbus and Queen Isabella.⁶⁷ Now and then they sound a defensive note. After a description of the selfless clergy of the Middle Ages, one Reader asks how could these be called "victims of a slavish superstition."⁶⁸ Catholic schoolbooks retain throughout the century the same kind of sectarian religious zeal exhibited by Protestant books in the first part of the century, but it is Catholicism rather than Protestantism that is the foundation of civilization and American independence.

Throughout the century toleration in matters of religion is explicitly advocated as a desirable goal for the individual and the nation. But except for those books published in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, this liberal attitude is contradicted by the rest of the book and extends only to Protestant sects. Several early Readers try to bring the logic of toleration to the child by the tale of a father who takes his sons on Sunday morning to the services of three different sects, explaining that God meant men to differ in forms of religious observance. After

⁶³ G 1878 Catholic, pp. 13, 66.

⁶⁴ G 1876 Comprehensive, p. 85.

⁶⁵ R 1873 Progressive, p. 53.

⁶⁶ G 1876 Comprehensive, p. 91.

⁶⁷ G 1876 Comprehensive, pp. 13, 91; R 1873 Progressive, p. 287.

⁶⁸ R 1873 Progressive, p. 288.

the services a man on the street becomes ill, and people of all creeds stop to help him as they return from their various services.⁶⁹ A common humanity nullifies ritualistic differences; differences in doctrine are not noticed in the story. But from the picture presented in these same books of the Catholics and the Jews, not to mention more remote sects, one wonders how much force such a lesson would have. One Speller, apparently in reaction to recent overt anti-Catholicism in the United States, includes the practice sentence: "The burning of a church is a sacrilegious [*sic*] act."⁷⁰ These are the only notices of religious toleration that are given a contemporary illustration or a concrete example in the schoolbooks published before the Civil War.

Most of the pleas for religious toleration are quite abstract; "Nothing is more unmannerly than to reflect on any man's profession, sect, or natural infirmity."⁷¹ The most popular illustration of toleration in practice comes from the pen of Benjamin Franklin: Abraham ejects a guest from his tent who refuses to join in his own religious rites. Later Abraham is rebuked by God, who calls this action a sin.⁷² It is interesting to note that in one version God's rebuke is omitted, and its moral becomes inverted into approval of religious intolerance.⁷³ But toleration as a virtue must surely have been negated in the child's mind by the attitude toward non-Protestant sects in the rest of the book. A typical case is that of an 1804 Reader by Peirce: on page 102 he recommends tolerance of all who differ in religious opinions, but the rest of the book is full of the horrible deeds of the Catholics.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ R 1799 *New Pleasing*, pp. 66-67; R 1803 *Biglow*, pp. 62-65; R 1828 *Robbins-A*, pp. 137-139; see also R 1823 *Pierpont*, pp. 358-362.

⁷⁰ S 1843 *Fowle*, p. 78.

⁷¹ R 1802 *Alden*, p. 32; R 1814 *Alden*, p. 29; see also R 1794 *Guide*, pp. 167-168; R 1798 *Enfield*, pp. 162-163; R 1801 *Heaton-P*, pp. 218-234; R 1810 *Thomson*, pp. 94-95; S 1823 *Marshall*, pp. 110-111; R 1826 *American-S*, pp. 52-55; R 1852 *Sweet*, p. 179.

⁷² R 1792 *Dana*, pp. 156-157; R 1809 *Pickett*, pp. 71-72; R 1821 *Bingham*, p. 13; R 1830 *Bartlett*, p. 233; R 1838 *Blake*, pp. 74-75; R 1843 *Olney*, pp. 21-22; R 1852 *Sweet*, pp. 70-71; R 1856 *Hillard*, p. 504; R 1873 *American*, pp. 106-108.

⁷³ R 1804 *New Introduction*, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁴ R 1804 *Peirce*: compare p. 102 with pp. 273, 274, 275, 278.

That Americans enjoy the unique distinction of having religious liberty is always mentioned proudly, even when in Connecticut and Massachusetts church and state were not yet separated.⁷⁵ Roger Williams is believed by some to have introduced the principle of separation of church and state to America. In the earlier textbooks this is not an unmixed blessing. Morse, for example, says of Rhode Island: this is probably why "the Sabbath and all religious institutions have been more neglected in this than in any other of the New-England States."⁷⁶ This serious indictment is typical of the general treatment accorded this state in the earlier books. Always it is the pariah of New England. Some of the histories published in the 1860's see Williams' opinions accompanied by others less desirable: "But with these doctrines of religious tolerance he united others that were deemed subversive of good government and opposed to the fundamental principles of civil society."⁷⁷ Finally, by the end of the century, Williams receives hearty approval as a pioneer in religious freedom, and Rhode Island loses its classification as substandard, although one of the Catholic Geographies indicates that Williams was merely "following the example of Maryland," the Catholic colony.⁷⁸

In the early books the introduction of religious toleration in Catholic Maryland often escapes mention. But after the late 1860's the change in religious attitudes in schoolbooks is fully evident as the Catholic founder of Maryland is given credit for this act. Indeed, all of the Histories from that period on observe with disapproval and wonder that the Protestants, when they wrested political control of that colony from the Catholics, did away with the Catholic toleration act. The terms of religious toleration in colonial Pennsylvania, on the other hand, are generously acclaimed throughout the century. William Penn, unlike Roger Williams or George Calvert, is universally accorded heroic stature for his contributions to toleration and for his Indian policy. The rapid settlement of his colony is often ascribed

⁷⁵ For examples: R 1806 *Peirce*, p. 82; G 1820 *Darby*, p. 90; G 1833 *Clute*, p. 177; G 1836 *Smith*, p. 81; G 1840 *Olney*, p. 64.

⁷⁶ G 1791 *Morse*, p. 104; see also G 1784 *Morse*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ H 1867 *Goodrich*, p. 41; H 1867 *Willson*, p. 75.

⁷⁸ G 1876 *Comprehensive*, p. 32.

to his religious policy. Penn is often called "the father of religious liberty in the Western World."⁷⁹ There must have been a good deal of confusion in the minds of the children who read these books on this subject, however, since regardless of what is said about Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, or Maryland, the child was taught throughout the century that the Pilgrims and Puritans (identical in most of these books) came to America to establish religious freedom, and that the initial glory is theirs. Much is made of the persecution they suffered in England, very little of the persecution meted out by the Puritans to those who differed with them on religious matters. Very few indicate that religious freedom in colonial Massachusetts was confined to Puritans.⁸⁰

In the charts of the religions of the world, that of the United States is always listed as Protestant, although there is no indication whether this is based on number of adherents or on more mysterious criteria.⁸¹ And in America religion is assumed to be most perfectly understood in two states, Massachusetts and Connecticut, states that did not completely disestablish the church until well into the nineteenth century, although the child is not so informed. Morse asserts that the religion of Connecticut is "the best in the world, perhaps, for a republican government."⁸² In consequence of its excellent religious system Connecticut, in specific contrast to Rhode Island, is assumed to have the purest morals in the United States, and, of course, in the world as well.⁸³ By the last three decades of the century ambivalence toward religious freedom is gone, and the United States is proudly described as Christian, but: "There is no established religion in the United States. Every man may worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. But Christianity is the basis of the government and institutions, and public opinion is enlisted in its favor."⁸⁴ Whereas in the earlier books specific preachments on religious toleration could hardly be effective in the face of the

⁷⁹ R 1803 Carey, p. 163.

⁸⁰ H 1866 Lossing, p. 65; H 1869 Quackenbos, p. 67; H 1875 Higginson, p. 60.

⁸¹ R 1806 Peirce, p. 82; G 1804 Goldsmith, p. 52; G 1817 Cummings, p. 197; G 1835 Huntington, p. 45; S 1846 Leonard, p. 165.

⁸² G 1791 Morse, p. 109.

⁸³ See below p. 172 ff. ⁸⁴ G 1892 Mitchell, p. 31.

intolerance exhibited toward all but Protestant sects, the context of the later books is much more in harmony with lessons in toleration. Indeed these later books often look smugly back to the uninformed days of the past, proud of the superior morals that have since evolved. Intolerance in colonial Massachusetts is deplored; "People had not then learned to leave one another free to worship in their own way."⁸⁵

The quality of this new toleration is a bit strained, however, in facing a new sect, the Church of Latter-Day Saints. To Willard "This is the most extraordinary imposture of the age. . . Mormonism gives its followers license to commit every crime which may be sanctioned by the leading prophet," and she hopes that they will disappear with the Indian, "overwhelmed by the relentless wave of civilization."⁸⁶ The limits of toleration seem evident in such a statement as the following: "I expect there will be much trouble yet on their account, because they allow things to be done which the people of the United States do not like."⁸⁷ Some books note with approval the intervention of the United States government to suppress their "vicious" practices.⁸⁸ Books published later in the 1880's and 1890's often forget their disagreeable practices in admiration for their contributions in settling the West: "They converted a desert spot into a garden."⁸⁹ In such books polygamy goes unmentioned. Since the Mormons are succeeding in one of the major tasks and accomplishments of the Americans, they are admitted into American society.

Sponsoring true religion and religious freedom, Americans are distinguished as the chosen people of God. God led Columbus to believe in the existence of another continent because Europe needed room to establish a freedom unattainable in its crowded quarters.⁹⁰ The analogy of the Americans to the ancient Hebrews, the chosen people of God, is used in many circumstances. The

⁸⁵ R 1883 Swinton-4, p. 192.

⁸⁶ H 1868 Willard, pp. 337-338, 504; see also H 1872 Venable, p. 184; H 1874 Scott, pp. 288-289; H 1879 Quackenbos, p. 244; H 1879? Campbell, p. 159.

⁸⁷ H 1866 Lossing, p. 219.

⁸⁸ H 1889 Chambers, p. 337; see also H 1869 Quackenbos, p. 190.

⁸⁹ H 1894 Fiske, p. 321; see also G 1872 Hall, p. 79; G 1887 Warren, p. 57; G 1887 Redway, p. 72.

⁹⁰ H 1889 Monroe, pp. 79-82.

first American settlers were led from Europe to America just as the Hebrews were led to the Promised Land.⁹¹ "His hand was scarcely more conspicuous in bringing Israel out of Egypt, than in providing for the settlement of the Pilgrims in the New World. Hardly more conspicuous to the sons of Jacob were the pillars of cloud and fire, than have been the dispensations of His providence in establishing and defending His American Israel."⁹² Washington on his deathbed remembers (according to Parson Weems) "how God, by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm, brought their fathers into this good land, a land flowing with milk and honey!"⁹³ The same concept is used to describe the American Revolution, with America compared to David, "the stripling of Israel, with scarcely a weapon to attack," arrayed against the British Goliath.⁹⁴ Following the Revolution:

The savage Canaanites have left our soil,
We the true Israel taste the wine and oil.⁹⁵

The American Constitution is compared with the Mosaic code in one instance; it too is apparently of divine inspiration.⁹⁶ The western migrant setting up a wilderness homestead is, like the Hebrew migrants to Egypt, under the direct protection of God.⁹⁷ The most popular conception within this analogy compares Washington to Moses.⁹⁸ Thus the premise of the founders of New England themselves—that New England was the New Zion and they the New Hebrews—is thoroughly accepted in these schoolbooks for the entire United States.

Innumerable instances of God's direct interposition in favor of

⁹¹ R 1826 American-S, p. 92; R 1830 Bartlett, pp. 209–210; R 1835 Porter, pp. 215–217.

⁹² H 1843 Hall and Baker, p. 4.

⁹³ R 1811 Chandler, p. 146.

⁹⁴ Speech by John Quincy Adams, July 4, 1793, quoted in R 1796 Bingham, p. 144; R 1826 American-S, p. 123.

⁹⁵ R 1806 Staniford, p. 231; S 1824 Bentley, p. 170; see also R 1810 Thomson, p. 15.

⁹⁶ R 1811 Hubbard, pp. 52–55.

⁹⁷ R 1823 Pierpont, pp. 244–245; R 1831 Bailey, p. 316; R 1845 Goldsbury and Russell, p. 37; R 1856 Hillard, p. 356.

⁹⁸ R 1806 Staniford, p. 85; R 1807 Bingham-C, pp. 281–284; R 1810 Alden, pp. 215–216; R 1809 Pickett, pp. 188–191; R 1811 Chandler, p. 145; R 1826 American-S, pp. 121–122.

the American people are given to support the idea that Americans are the people chosen by God in the modern world for a special destiny. In all books America is assumed to be particularly blessed by Providence. In one book this becomes evidence of the beneficence of God in general: "The predominant tendency of His providence towards us as a nation, evinces His benevolent designs."⁹⁹ Conversely, it is sometimes urged that: "The marks of divine favor shown to our nation, the striking interposition of divine PROVIDENCE in our behalf, cannot fail to enliven the patriotic sentiments of a pious mind."¹⁰⁰

The literal intervention of the Deity in American affairs is illustrated throughout our history. Columbus is guided by God through great difficulties; His intervention is not by inspiration but by miracles.¹⁰¹ The planting of the Pilgrims was "ordained by Providence to reform the world."¹⁰² Specific examples of supernatural use of, or interference with, the laws of nature in our behalf appear in almost every schoolbook. In all the Histories and some Readers God sent a plague on the Indians of Massachusetts to make room for the settlement of the Pilgrims. They came as "The chosen servants of the Lord, to open the forests to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of righteousness; to restore man, oppressed and trampled on by his fellow, to religious and civil liberties and equal rights."¹⁰³ The American Revolution in its inception and its course was also directed literally by God: "The great parent of the universe has peculiarly distinguished the Americans in encouraging them to defend their rights."¹⁰⁴ Many instances are given of the protection of God in the midst of battle. In one case God sends a fog to protect the retreat of the

⁹⁹ R 1810 Alden, p. 126.

¹⁰⁰ R 1834 S. Willard-P, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ G 1818 Mann, p. 47; R 1819 Strong, p. 45; R 1852 Sweet, p. 302.

¹⁰² R 1826 American-S, p. 221; see also R 1806 Peirce, p. 78; R 1826 Greenwood and Emerson, p. 102; R 1835 Pierpont-Y, pp. 103–107; H 1851 Guernsey, pp. vi, 102; H 1852 E. Willard, p. 175; R 1852 Sweet, pp. 302, 303, 304.

¹⁰³ R 1831 Cheever, p. 335.

¹⁰⁴ R 1797 Thomas, p. 208; see also R 1830 Emerson, pp. 170–171; R 1830 Practical-R, p. 70; H 1833 C. Goodrich, p. 195; R 1835 Pierpont-Y, p. 107; R 1835 Porter, pp. 282–284; H 1836 Olney, pp. 138–139; R 1852 Gilder, pp. 96–98; H 1852 E. Willard, p. 175.

American army from the British: "But for the interposition of a *cloud* of darkness the Egyptians would have overwhelmed the Israelites upon the sea shore."¹⁰⁵ Thus God both decreed and directed the American Revolution.

Washington was expressly commissioned by heaven to deliver the Americans. God trained him before the Revolution and protected him for its duration: "Everywhere we see the hand of God conducting him into danger, that he might extract from it the wisdom of an experience not otherwise to be attained, and develop those heroic qualities by which alone danger and difficulty can be surmounted,—but all the while covering him, as with a shield."¹⁰⁶ Many instances show the divine protection hovering over Washington: in one, at the defeat of Braddock's troops, "I expected every moment to see him fall; nothing but the superintending care of Providence could have saved him from the fate of all around him."¹⁰⁷ The writing of the American Constitution also exhibits "the finger of that Almighty Hand, which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution."¹⁰⁸

Thus the United States is a Protestant nation with a divinely appointed mission. As the modern Chosen People its inhabitants have a special motive for piety, and concomitantly they have a special motive for patriotism. American nationalism and religion are thoroughly interwoven; love of the American nation is a correlative of love of God.

¹⁰⁵ R 1831 Lowe-Second, p. 49; see also R 1830 Practical-R, pp. 71–72.

¹⁰⁶ R 1845 Swan, p. 421; see also R 1789 Webster, p. 114; R 1810 Alden, p. 119; S 1815 Bradley, p. 146; G 1818 Morse, p. 104; S 1824 Bentley, p. 170; R 1852 Brothers, p. 374.

¹⁰⁷ R 1824 Lowe, p. 13; see also R 1813 Richardson, p. 117; R 1852 Brothers, p. 374; H 1855 Berard, p. 92.

¹⁰⁸ R 1831 Cheever, p. 221; see also H 1857 Lossing, p. 169.

III. The Nature of Man